

Resolution Relating to Fund-Raising Activities Conducted by the Congregations or its Member Organizations

[Written by a committee of Redemption Ev. Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin,
for the benefit of its membership and adopted in Jan, 1981 as their church's guidelines.]

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Introduction

There is general agreement by most who have studied Scripture that buying and selling of services or property by a Christian congregation or its associate organizations is neither commanded nor forbidden. Therefore a warning is immediately in place that we do not engage in un-Christian judging of churches that engage in such activities even though their actions may be unwise. We do enjoy Christian freedom.

Titus 1:15, "To the pure, all things are pure."

Gal. 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

There is also general agreement by most who have studied Scripture on the topic of stewardship that activities arranged primarily to make money for the church through commercial endeavors almost always tend to erode and destroy the true and proper manner of church funding enjoined in the Bible, that is, support by means of regular, dedicated generous, free-will offerings from individual Christians given out of love for their Savior. The tract, *Should We "Make Money for the Church,"* by the department of Stewardship, Missionary Education and Promotion, LC-MS properly observes. "The leaders of all major Protestant denominations in North America are opposed to "money-making" affairs. Because of sad experience these leaders are urging their congregations to do away with such affairs. One of the larger Lutheran Church bodies in the United States, as a matter of policy, forbids its subsidized congregations the use of questionable methods in church financing. And why? Because it says, 'Commercialism is eating like a cancer into the vital organs of the church, causing spiritual paralysis and nullifying the very purpose of the church's existence.' That is its conviction in the matter." The same tract concludes, "*Experience Proves* that money-making affairs

- do not actually help a congregation
- often are questionable in nature
- tend to commercialize the church
- substitute buying and selling for Christian giving
- create unwelcome competition with business firms
- take time and energy from our people which are needed for spiritual work in the congregation
- are a confession that our Christian giving leaves much to be desired
- give the impression to many on the outside that we have a difficult time making ends meet
- give encouragement to those who say: "All the Church wants is money."
- embarrass those who give directly to the Lord
- finally *undermine* the practice of Christian stewardship itself."

Many voices also remind us of the privileges churches enjoy in America because our constitution guarantees us freedom of religion. These guarantees extend to tax immunities and special privileges to function as a religious not-for-profit corporation. These privileges are endangered when we do not confine ourselves to activities which fulfill the declared purpose as a church or religious organization. Taking any advantage of a tax free status to compete in the marketplace with merchants who must pay taxes is an unfair practice, an abuse that must be avoided. We are to obey the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

Nevertheless, if a church is scrupulous and conducts an event that brings in extra revenue in full compliance with the letter and spirit of the law, we must be careful not to judge them as sinning. They are practicing their Christian freedom even though we may question the wisdom of their activities.

A more intricate situation arises when a church, church worker or church affiliated organization is not supported properly by the parent body. Is the choice there simply this, “Get funding by free gifts or go out of existence?” Scripture seems to indicate that the question is not that simple. St. Paul, who was sent out on his mission journeys from Antioch found himself in a world where Antioch, Jerusalem and that part of the world were in the grips of a most severe famine. St. Paul did not come to the conclusion that because he was not supported in a normal missionary manner, by gifts from the home congregations, he need not carry out his mission work. He made tents on the side—buying material and selling tents—so support could be found for himself and his co-workers.

Acts 18:1-4 “After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

Acts 20:33-35 “I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.””

Accordingly we should be careful not to judge the motives of those who suggest or engage in some commercial endeavor to seek support for the Lord’s work when support from free-will offerings diminish or cease. We might here think of auxiliary organizations that are not being funded properly because a congregation is not able or willing to meet its budget for whatever reason. Organization members with good motives may wish to roll up their sleeves and earn a little money themselves.

Consideration must also be given to the role of example and training in striving to cultivate the sanctified Christian life. An example of hard manual work or a leading of one’s learners in hard work may be just what is best in a given situation. Apparently the philosophy of the lazy person, to eat without working for it, was quite prevalent in the Thessalonian congregation. One of the great goals of Paul and his co-workers as they worked for their own support was to set a good example for the Thessalonians in this area of Christian life.

II Thess. 3:6-10 “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command, you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary we worked night and day laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

The same goals may be primary in the minds of leaders of Pioneer groups as they lead their trains in a car wash or paper drive to earn money for their own physical needs, tents, etc. Pastor Wm. Lange makes this observation in his paper, “Commercialism in the Church;” “We oftentimes complain about our young people, that they expect the world with a fence around it as a gift. And with glorious inconsistency we ask the congregation to hand them everything on a platter. If the young people’s society had to rehearse a play and present it, in order to help the congregation purchase a 16 millimeter film projector, it might appreciate the projector just a mite more, and take care of it just a little better.” One could also make a similar observation in regard to Lutheran band

members working to get money to buy new band uniforms. First admire them for rolling up their sleeves when regular funding was not there, and secondly, realize that they may learn an important lesson and take better care of their new uniforms.

Because buying and selling by a church is not commanded nor condemned in Scripture we certainly would not condemn buying and selling that involves propagation of the Gospel such as publishing Bibles, religious literature, or even making readily available greeting cards that keep Christ in Christmas.

In making all these observations about the various ways in which we may exercise our Christian freedom in this area, let us not, however, use them as stepping stones to wander away from sound Biblical stewardship principles. Let us hold to this good council that embarking on a commercial venture merely for the purpose of making money is best avoided by the church and its organizations. This commercial spirit is at variance with the need to strive for, teach and inspire the best manner of support, that of generous free-will giving out of love for Christ. Accordingly Redemption Ev. Lutheran Church will operate according to the following resolutions in the area of fund raising activities by the church and its internal organizations.

Resolution

1. Be it resolved that Redemption Ev. Lutheran Church and School and all organizations within the congregation must first seek approval from the church council and obtain that approval from the council before engaging in any fund raising activity.
2. Be it further resolved that in reaching decisions in the area of fund raising the members concerned and the church council prayerfully search scripture for guidance and be assisted by the observations made in the introduction to this resolution as well as the principles listed below.
3. And be it finally resolved that no fund raising activity will be permitted which is in conflict with civil law.

1. The means used to raise funds to finance the work of the congregation, the school, the various societies and organizations within our congregation, and the work of the church at large must be in accord with what scripture teaches.

II Tim. 3:16, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

John 8:31-32, “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

2. The free, dedicated, generous, cheerful giving of money, goods, and selfless service are the marks of the Christian stewardship of its members which ought to be amply sufficient to finance, the work of the church. This stewardship is motivated by response to God’s love, zeal to spread the gospel, the claims of Christian fellowship and the needs of a neighbor.

II Cor. 8:7, “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”

I Cor. 16:2, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”

Proverbs 3:9. “Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce;”

Matt. 25:40, “The king will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’”

3. Growth in the grace of Christian giving and stewardship expression may be hindered when the church, the school, or any organization of the congregation engages in such commercial fund raising activities as the buying and selling of merchandise, the offering of restaurant or catering services, expectation of preferential discount or operation of business services not essential to the unique ministry of the church

Mark 11:15-17, “On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. And would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as He taught them, He said, ‘Is it not written: My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.’”

(While changing money and making available sacrificial animals was not a sin in itself, Christ is here chastising these people for turning what could be a permitted and helpful service into a distracting, temple desecrating business that also took advantage of the people using the service.)

4. Wholesome Christian fellowship which builds bonds of unity and devotion both among the members of the congregation and for the cause of Jesus Christ is a basic and important objective for the church and ought not to be confused or bound up with efforts that have money-raising as their dominant goal.

John 15:12-17, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call your servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”

Acts 2:42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer.”

5. Certain organizations such as the school and Pioneer organizations have a responsibility not only to teach Christian doctrine but also to cultivate other talents and virtues. The lesson that it takes hard work to earn our food and sustenance is, without doubt, taught best through actual hard work and then enjoying the fruits of one’s labors. Activities that are set up primarily to teach this lesson to youth should not be confused with an effort to support the church by commercial means. By word, by example and by the rule, “If a man will not work, he shall not eat,” St. Paul strove to teach this lesson to the Thessalonians.

II Thess. 3:6-10, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

6. The Congregation should not expect from those outside the church their direct gifts, support, purchases patronage, or preferential pricing for the support of the ministry of Jesus Christ to which the church is committed. (Luke 10:2-11 and Luke 22:35-38.) Where men outside the church are moved to assist in the church’s program, such help may be received and accepted with thanks provided its acceptance creates no problem of conscience for the congregation.

7. There is a danger for the congregation, school, and organizations when they begin programs or build facilities which place a major reliance for their development and maintenance upon financial support from nonmembers, however welcome or beneficial these contributions may be.

Luke 14:28-30. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'"

8. When an organization is suffering financially because it is not being funded sufficiently through free-will offerings and wishes to engage in a fund raising endeavor, it should be encouraged first to make special efforts to solicit support through free-will giving rather than turn to buying and selling and making a profit. The congregation should make every effort to co-operate in this better way.

9. Because of its specific status under corporate law, with the tax benefits thus given, the church is obligated ethically as well as legally to confine its activities to those which fulfill its declared purpose as a church, recognizing that only so long as and to the extent it adheres to these purposes can it claim its beneficial immunities from taxation.

Mark 12:17, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.'"

10. At no time shall lotteries, games of chance, or any others bearing a taint of gambling be used as fund raising events in our congregation, school, or organizations. They are always an offence to the Christian conscience.

Romans 13:9, "The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

11. At times we cautiously avoid a practice which we have the Christian freedom to do in order not to cause offence to such as may not fully understand the doctrine of Christian freedom. A congregation may be wise to use this caution also in deciding what type of buying and selling it will permit. We should be encouraged to view this caution not as a trampling on our Christian freedoms but as it is indeed, a deference to the weak out of love.

Romans 14:19-21, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall."

I Peter 2:16. "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God."

12. When it comes to activities in the church, we do well to exercise good stewardship of time, energies, and resources. It is only too easy to allow the less noble to crowd out the more noble—to let announcements for bazaars etc. crowd out spiritual food in the bulletins, in the newsletter, on the bulletin boards, and after services. It is also possible that members devote their energies to commercial endeavors but have little time or energy left to attend Bible Class, do evangelism work, volunteer maintenance help, etc. An ongoing principle is that the material efforts should never threaten or displace spiritual efforts.

Gal. 5:16-17, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.”

Luke 10:41, “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 28:19-20, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

13. As the Church Council endeavors to guide the congregation and its organizations in good practice in the area of fund raising, it should strive in every way to be consistent and deal evenhandedly with all organizations.

14. While adopting a course that strives to minimize fund-raising activities other than support by gifts freely given, we should never lose sight of the truth that buying and selling of services or property by a Christian congregation or its associate organizations is neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. We must beware of legalism, self-righteous feelings and also un-Christian judging of others.

Titus 1:5, “To the pure, all things are pure.”

Gal. 5:1, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”